News Release
Communiqué

Ontario

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

Ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée

For Immediate Release
August 31, 2007
2007/nr-186

MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT TRANSFORMING COMMUNITY LIVING TO HELP SENIORS LIVE INDEPENDENTLY AT HOME IN NORTH EAST LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORK

Aging at Home Strategy Will be LHIN led and Reflect Local Cultural Diversity

TIMMINS – The McGuinty government is launching an Aging at Home Strategy that will transform community health care services in the North East Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) so that seniors can live healthy, independent lives in their own homes, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

"Our goal is to open a whole world of opportunity for seniors that will offer new lifestyle choices that are reflective of how Ontario's seniors truly want to live," said Smitherman "As our population ages, we need to look for innovative solutions that are more responsive to their needs and allow seniors to continue to live in comfort and with respect in their own homes, ideally for the rest of their days."

The McGuinty government is investing nearly $34 million in the North East LHIN over the next three years as part of an overall $700 million investment announced earlier this week.

As part of a three-year strategy, Ontario's 14 Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) will lead an exciting initiative that will impact the way services are delivered and help provide more equitable access to health care by matching the needs of the local senior population with the appropriate support services. These services could include enhanced home care and community support services like meals, transportation, shopping, snow shoveling, friendly home calling, adult day programs, homemaking services and caregiver supports.

"We are truly pleased with the government's commitment to improving the lives of seniors in the North East LHIN," said Mathilde Gravelle Bazinet, chair of the North East LHIN. "This focus on community-based care will give seniors the support they need to achieve greater independence and better health so they can remain in their own communities, close to friends and loved ones."

The Aging at Home Strategy will offer new possibilities for Ontario's culturally diverse populations and other community-level organizations like service clubs and groups of seniors to help serve themselves. It will make available supports to help keep our seniors healthy and active, longer. Innovative thinking combined with health care solutions that encourage prevention and health promotion will play a large role in the LHINs plans to support Ontario's seniors and their caregivers.

"As with the development of residential hospices we are witnessing across the province, government investments in community, like that we are announcing today, find success for many reasons," said Smitherman "not least of which is because they leverage the love and support that is on offer from countless community volunteers seeking to make a positive difference in the lives of their fellow citizens."

Today's investment has been designed with an historic new patient-centred funding model that recognizes population growth and promotes equitable access to services across Ontario based on the actual health needs of the population. Funding for enhanced services will flow to the LHINs in April 2008.

It is estimated that the senior's population in Ontario will double in the next 16 years. This investment will result in a more sustainable health care system that provides supports to seniors where they most want them, in their own homes.

This is just one more example of how, working together, Ontarians have achieved results in health care services. Other initiatives include:

- $800 million more in long-term care funding since 2003
- $463 million more in home care funding since 2003
- $100 million more in community support service funding since 2003
- $875 million invested in reducing wait times since 2003 to perform more than 1,270,000 procedures.

Today's initiative is part of the McGuinty government's plan for innovation in public health care, building a system that delivers on three priorities – keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

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